



Plan³ YOUR⁴ Year⁵

Homeschool Planning for Purpose and *Peace*¹²

by Pam Barnhill

Foreword by Sarah Mackenzie,
author of *Teaching From Rest*

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How to Use This Book

This book is broken into ten distinct planning steps. In each section, I give you some encouragement, inspiration, and ideas. At the end of each step is a “More For You” section where I have gathered some of the best additional resources I could find on the topic, such as books, articles, and audio. These additional resources give you another view, another opinion, and more ideas on how to approach that step. Finally, each section also contains “Action Items” steps. By completing each action item you will be creating a plan for your homeschool year!

More Than an eBook

The purchase of this book also includes the Plan Your Year Planning Kit. In the kit you will find over forty planning forms to help you create a workable plan for your year. The forms are referenced throughout this book in the “Action Items” steps. You can print these forms and write on them, type directly into the form, print it and save it using Adobe Acrobat, or even use them to create a paperless record-keeping system (see Step 9 for more details).

In addition to the planning forms, I have created a number of videos where I walk you through portions of the planning process. Clicking on the video links in the ebook will launch the video in YouTube where you can watch and rewatch as many times as you would like.

The planning kit folder also includes a number of sample forms and schedules. Seeing how others use these forms will give you ideas as you plan your own year. These forms are not perfect examples to replicate, but instead meant to show possibilities as you work through the process.

Finally the planning kit also includes two audio interviews. These inspiring talks will give you a peek into the homeschool planning process of other homeschooling moms. Audio notes for each conversation are available by [clicking here](#).

Sarah Mackenzie, author of *Teaching from Rest: The Homeschooler's Guide to Unshakable Peace* chats with me about “Planning from a State of Rest.”

Mystie Winckler, author of *Paperless Home Organization* and creator of the Simplified Organization eCourse, chats about “Overcoming Barriers: Working Your Plan in Your Real Day-to-Day.”

Step One: Create a Vision

Has anyone ever asked you why you homeschool? If they did, could you tell them? I used to have problems with it. I would stumble over my words, not really sure how to explain our convictions, worried that the next thing out of my mouth would give offense (so easy for anyone about a touchy topic, super easy for me).

While there are a few folks who are looking for a fight when they question your desire to homeschool, many are simply curious. You might be the only person they have met who homeschools. For an older generation the concept is completely foreign to them. Whether their motives be confrontation or curiosity, I have found that the best way to answer their questions is to have a clear idea of the vision you have for your homeschool.

The Elevator Pitch

In business circles a short one or two sentence synopsis of a business's purpose and benefits is called an elevator pitch. This pithy statement is the answer to the question, "So what do you do?" I have a homeschooling resources blog called [Everyday Snapshots](#). When I meet someone and they want to know what I do, I tell them, "I have a blog that provides helpful tips and resources to homeschooling moms."

As homeschoolers we can use the elevator pitch technique to create a one to two sentence vision statement for our homeschool. This is a great tool to have when strangers ask why we are homeschooling, but it is also a fabulous tool to have as you sit down to craft your homeschool plan each year. Why? It can become a litmus test for us as we plan. Test everything you are considering adding to your plan against the statement you make in your elevator pitch.

Let me give an example. Back to my blog for a minute. Let's say I am approached by a company that sells barbecue sauce. They know my audience is largely moms and they offer me compensation if I would post about their barbecue sauce on my blog. I'm not going to lie. Blogging doesn't pay much, so I would be sorely tempted to partner with this brand. Yet, if I held that barbecue sauce up to my elevator pitch I would be able to see that even though I could possibly spin it to fit my content (kind of), it really doesn't fit with my vision of providing helpful tips and resources for homeschooling moms. So, no to the sauce (darn it).



It is the same as we plan our homeschool. If you know your vision, then you are able to evaluate opportunities, curriculum, and plans against it. If it doesn't fit, then toss it. You have a standard to evaluate against.

The Longer Vision Statement

In addition to the elevator pitch it is helpful to have a longer vision statement that guides your actions and your homeschool. This statement is a manifesto of sorts about the education that is going on in your home.

A helpful place to start this process is by looking into the future. Ask yourself, as your children graduate from your homeschool and leave your home, what kind of person do you want to see before you? What skills do you want them to be proficient at? What books do you want them to have read? What ideas do you want them to have been exposed to?

Imagine that future young adult standing in front of you and sit down and make a list of what he is like. Try to keep it general, with about 10-15 points on it. This is a document you will review one or two times a year, but even then you will not want to slog through 100 bullet points. List only general ideas and skills, not specific book lists and benchmarks.

The longer vision statement is not something you are going to spring on the stranger who asks you why you homeschool, but it might be something you discuss over tea with a friend who is considering the path for her own family and who questions you more deeply about your methods.

Some vision statement bullet point examples:

- We want our children to be able to comfortably and effectively communicate through spoken word and in various forms of writing from formal to informal.
- We want our children to have a relationship with the great works and thinkers of western culture, including the literature and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome and the doctors of the Church.
- We want our children to have a working familiarity with the geography of the world around them and be able to identify major countries, landforms, and water features.

Your specific vision statements may look very different in content from the ones above, but they should be unique to your family and the kind of education you desire for your children. Don't forget to include practical, physical, and artistic (music, dance, visual arts) skills as well as academics.



The person in front of us may have different plans or abilities than what we imagined in our head. That doesn't mean we avoid creating a vision, but it does mean we consider the person and put them above any expectations we contrived. The vision is the tool, not the master.

Keep in mind that a vision is exactly that — something you see for the future and not a true reality. While your vision statement will give you purpose as you plan and work, it may not end up being completely true. The person in front of us may have different plans or abilities than what we imagined in our head. That doesn't mean we avoid creating a vision, but it does mean we consider the person and put them above any expectations we contrived. The vision is the tool, not the master.

Every year as you sit down to plan and evaluate curriculum, pull out your vision statement and reread it to refresh your memory. You may at that time choose to make changes to the document. As your children change, and as you change and grow, the vision may adapt with you. Use it as a starting point for deciding on what plans to make and what resources to buy. The next chapters will show you how.

More for You

- **“Big Picture Goals”** — Goes beyond goals for a specific year to address goals for the entire homeschool journey.

Action Items

- Create a vision for your homeschool. You might start this process by chatting with your husband and, if you desire, beginning with prayer. Make a list of 10-15 bullet point statements of things you want your children to be able to do or have been exposed to while in your home. Grab your Visions and Goals planning sheet and a pen and jot those down. Then set it aside for a day or two.
- In a couple of days come back and reevaluate what you have written. Make changes, grab a new form, and finalize your list. Store it away in your homeschool binder to be consulted in the future.

- Create an elevator pitch for your homeschool. Even though I talk about this one first in the chapter, it is probably more easily written after the vision statement. Review your vision statement and summarize in one to two brief sentences why you homeschool.
- Once you have written your statement, practice saying it until it rolls easily off your tongue. Now you have something quick and practiced to say when strangers question you, but you also have a mantra to repeat as you stroll a curriculum fair and are tempted to spend money on everything shiny and new!